



Crafts, Cards, and Chocolate Pudding by Pawprinter

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Summary: For Thanksgiving of 1984, Dustin decides to thank Steve for being the World's Greatest Babysitter.

Crafts, Cards, and Chocolate Pudding

(A little late for Thanksgiving, sorry!)

For Halloween, I rewatched majority of *Stranger Things* season 2. One of my favourite things about the show is the unlikely friendship between Steve and Dustin. Their scenes are truly the best. I really wanted to write some of this brotherly bond, so... here it is!

This fic is set during the final episode of season 2. The events of the season take place during late October/early November, while the final scene (the winter dance) takes place in mid-December. This is set between those events.

Warning: minor swearing

Enjoy!

Crafts, Cards, and Chocolate Pudding

Dustin pressed his lips tightly together and ran his fingers over the jagged edges of the piece of paper clutched in his hand. Each time he pushed on the pedals of his bike meant he was *that* much closer to the Harrington residence, which filled with more and more troubles.

It was Thanksgiving, which usually meant he would spend time with his family. Lucky (or unlucky, depending on the way he looked at it), they finished dinner early and he had made a hasty escape. He had more urgent things needing his attention than watching a boring rerun on the television while his dad snored away in the armchair.

Under the nearest street lamp, he came to a jarring stop, the brakes of his bike squealing into the otherwise silent night. He lifted the piece of sketching paper up to his face, examining it with critical eyes. He would never claim to be an artist or a poet, but it was better than the mess he usually made on paper. He shrugged, letting the card drop to his side.

His gaze shifted to the house only a few feet away from him. The only thing separating him from the front door was a worn path of mildew covered stones. The lights throughout the house were flicked on, casting a glow across the front yard.

No turning back, he decided. After all, he *did* bike all this way.

Swearing under his breath, he pushed off the ground, allowing the force of gravity to carry him down the slight slope leading towards the Harrington's front door. Without coming to a complete stop, he hopped off his bike and let it drop haphazardly to the ground.

Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god.

He marched up to the front door, ignoring all of the worries filling his mind. A few hours ago, this all seemed like a great idea. *Now?* Not so much.

Would he think he was lame? Would he look stupid? Would he make fun of him? *Would the others at school make fun of him if they found out?*

He shook himself. This was *Steve*. They were friends. Even if he managed to set himself on fire somehow, he doubted anyone from school would find out. Steve wasn't like that. He was cool.

Dustin knocked on the door before he could think about it further. The more time he spent on the Harrington's lawn, the more nervous he became.

After a half minute of waiting, the door swung open, revealing a woman his mother's age. Dustin flashed her a wide smile, showing off his bright teeth.

"Hi, Mrs. Harrington," he chimed. The woman lifted her eyebrows and frowned, clearly not too impressed with the child.

"I'm not interested in buying cookies, or whatever else you're buying," she said dismissively, the door already closing.

"Wait – wh?" Dustin gawked, lurching forward to place his hand against the door. "No, no. I'm here for your son." *That* made her stop.

She poked her head around the frame, more confusion lining her face. Dustin didn't think that was possible, but here they were.

"My son?" It was her turn to gawk at the younger kid. It looked like she didn't believe him.

"Yeah. Steve. He lives here, doesn't he?" Dustin tried to peer around her shoulder, searching for the older boy in the house. His face lit up when he caught sight of him sitting in the kitchen, completely oblivious to the conversation at the door. "Hey, Steve!" He waved his hand over his head as he greeted him. His head snapped towards the door, his confusion and shock shifting towards a grin.

"Hey, man!" Steve pushed away from the kitchen table, tossing his napkin onto his chair. Dustin beamed at him. As he reached the door, Steve turned to his mom. "Thanks, mom. I got it." The woman nodded her head and turned away from the two boys. The smile slipped off Steve's face as soon as she had her back to them. "What's going on?" Steve stepped out of his house, the door closing behind him. Dustin realized that he looked worried. "Everything okay? Are you okay?" He scanned him, looking for any signs of distress.

"I'm fine, I'm fine." Dustin waved his hand in the air, dismissing the idea quickly. With those words, the unease left Steve's face, being replaced with a smile.

"Nothing ate your cat again?" he teased. Dustin rolled his eyes.

"That was *one time*, man. One time..." Without further prompting, he lifted up his hand, the rumpled card clutched in it. "I, uh. I actually got something for you. Well, I didn't get it. I made it. Well, that's not true either. I got the paper and crayons from Will, but... Well... Just..." He thrust the paper forward, hitting Steve in the stomach. "Here."

Steve lifted his eyebrow, all signs of joking gone from his face once again. He took the card from his hands, his eyes scanning it quickly. Part of Dustin wanted to disappear into the darkness as he read it. *Who thought this was a good idea?* Totally not cool.

He waited with baited breath as Steve opened the card and read the

message on the inside. His face was completely emotionless, sending Dustin spiralling. *Oh, god. What have I done? He thinks it's lame. It is lame.*

"Dude." Steve's eyes left the card, a soft smile on his face. *"You made this?"*

"I, uh... Yeah." He rubbed his hands along his pants nervously. "I just wanted to thank you. You know. For everything." He laughed nervously. "Thanksgiving!"

Steve looked back at the card, an astonished look on his face. On the front of the card, a handprint was drawn in brown crayon, the thumb housing eyes and a beak, and the wrist sprouting two tiny legs. He was pretty sure he made an exact replica of that drawing when he was eight for his mom. Teachers *loved* to get them to draw turkeys for Thanksgiving. Now that was something he excelled at.

On the inside of the card, a message was scrawled in Dustin's messy handwriting. He was barely able to decipher it, which wasn't surprising – his printing hadn't been much neater at that age.

To Steve,

Thanks for everything. You saved our butts this year and were there for me when nobody else was. Even though Dart ate my cat, without him, we never would've become buds, so I guess he's pretty cool.

Thanks. Happy Thanksgiving.

Dustin

To accompany the message, a drawing was on the other page, making Steve burst out laughing. It was a picture of something that could've possibly resembled a human teenager, wearing a shirt with a clear message written across it. *World's Greatest Babysitter*. The only indication that the drawing was supposed to be of him was the nest of hair on the stick figure's head and the nail filled bat in his hands.

"It's lame, I know." Dustin began talking to fill the silence. Steve had been staring at the card for the longest time, each second filling him with more regret. "I just, you know, wanted to say thanks, man. You

were the only one in this whole freaking town that helped me with Dart – when I really needed someone. And you kept us safe – all of us – from the demodogs and Billy and... Well... You're really cool, man. And you give me advice and don't make me feel like some *loser* or whatever, an-"

Dustin let out a yelp as Steve pulled him in for a hug. His hand came up to affectionately rub Dustin's head, skewing his hat. Dustin couldn't keep the smile off his face and returned the hug with enthusiasm.

"This is really sweet, kid," Steve commented, pulling away from the hug. When Dustin didn't drop his arms, he snorted with laughter, and wrapped his arms around his shoulders again. "Thank you. I really appreciate it." Dustin didn't know if he ever heard Steve more sincere or touched in his life.

"Aw, don't start crying, Harrington," he quipped, pulling away from the embrace. "I just am really thankful for everything you've done for us." His smile widened. "I'm thankful for you, too. You're kind of like a brother I never had." Dustin didn't know where the words were coming from or why they were leaving his mouth, but he didn't stop to question it. It was Thanksgiving, *dammit*, and he was going to make sure he thanked his unlikely friend.

It looked like Steve didn't know what to do with this information. His eyes widened slightly at that and he puffed out his cheeks.

"Damn," he muttered, running his hand through his hair, leaving it sticking up at odd angles. After a split second, he chuckled and clapped Dustin on his shoulder. "You're the best, you know? And," he seemed to struggle with his next words, "just so you know, you're like a brother to me, too." With that, Dustin's face lit up.

"Really?"

"Really, really." The two boys beamed at each other for a long moment. Just a few weeks ago, Dustin never would've guessed that him and *Steve* would actually be friends. "C'mon. We're having Thanksgiving dinner right now. I doubt my parents will mind if you want to join?"

"Done." After all, he was pretty sure chocolate pudding would be involved and *how could he deny that?* Steve threw his arm around Dustin's shoulders again, pulling him alongside him into his house.

As he walked into the house, Dustin felt himself feeling the tiniest twinge of thankfulness that Mike, Will, Lucas and Nancy were all busy when Dart ate his cat. Without the little guy, he never would've found such an unlikely ally in Steve.

Thanks for reading. This was my first time writing for this fandom and for these characters, so I would appreciate any feedback! One of my main goals is capturing bonds and characterization, so I hope I managed to do so. I hope you enjoyed!